

FIVE SURE WAYS TOWARD SELF-ACTUALIZATION

- 1) Disclose your mantra to complete strangers at the grocery store.
- 2) In a jammed movie theatre during the bathtub scene in Last Tango in Paris, throw a popcorn box at the screen, stand on your seat, and with great indignation chant, "Cathexis, Cathexis, Cathexis."
- 3) Approach a traffic cop during the busiest time of the day and demand, "What is haiku poetry, anyway?"
- 4) Buy a dozen ribbed condoms with funny faces on them. Hang outside Mr. Donut and wave them at passers-by. Smile a lot.
- 5) Write essays on unanswerable questions: What are the exact dimensions of negative space? If you waited long enough for the ineffable, would it appear? How would Yeats' poetry have been affected if he'd spent one hour in an orgone box with Madame Blavatsky? Make copies of these essays. Send them to your enemies on their birthdays, wedding anniversaries, Valentine's Day ...

THE SCHOLAR

There's an imaginary line between his living room and study through which his wife and children may not pass.

He speaks six languages, mostly to himself.

He'll say hello to the plumber or mailman, but refuses to shake their hands.

His book, The Use and Abuse of the Semicolon in Paradise Lost: A Phenomenological Approach, has just arrived at the bookstores; he's preparing a by-invitation-only seminar on the subject.

He's a strict vegetarian and owns a St. Bernard named Thyme.

He delivers a paper on hermeneutics, which receives a standing ovation from his wife and two little girls.

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Lately, he's confused, unable to make decisions. He feels like beheading his family, but instead takes long naps. After days of close reading, he senses a thematic

connection between the beards in Shakespeare's plays, but what that connection is, he can't say.

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Every year an original idea is harder to come by. More fresh air and exercise might clear his head — golf, perhaps. But the image of that dimpled, white ball hurtling through space makes him think of the earth suspended in the universe, which reminds him of the stars, angels, ether, the music of the spheres. Which gives him headaches and makes him a very poor golfer.

So he remains in his study, reading The Great Masters, sharpening pencils, stamping the inside covers of first editions with his personalized embosser.

Sometimes he stares at a world map spanning the length of wall opposite him. Or he admires a tall, antique grandfather clock, listening to it tick, tick, ticking, wondering, just wondering, if it might miss a beat.

— Peter Johnson

Providence RI

JUDGMENT CALL

"This is a fine group of three-year-old York boars..." The judge winces as his mike squeals. "These are strong aggressive animals — frothing at the mouth wanting to fight. That's what you look for in a boar." He roots around in his notes. "All right, for the Grand Champion, I'm going to go with number 25. That's just an excellent example of a York boar. Even though the number 40 has more size, I like the structure of the 25. For my money, structure is everything. I especially like the breadth and muscle of this boar. I like the well-developed pastern, and the leanness, combined with the good size and absence of pin-nipples. There's a nice sway to this boar's underside. Just a fine all-'round champion."

Again the mike squeals. The judge grunts something to his assistant, who scrambles away. "Our reserve champion, number 40, is also a fine boar," the judge continues. "But the structure isn't quite as good as on our first-place animal. I'd like to open up the chest of this boar, and drop the whole thing down a fuzz or two. The forelegs are solid, but